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One Must Also be an Artist: Online Delivery of Teacher Education

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Abstract

The shift in teacher education from face-to-face delivery to Distance Education mode means that the current landscape for the preparation of specialist and generalist Arts teachers is both complex and challenging, particularly since there is almost no guiding literature in the field of teacher education that attends specifically to this curriculum area. This paper takes as its case, one regional Australian School of Education that has translated face-to-face delivery into distance education modes in both secondary and primary arts education, through a suite of interactive programs and pedagogical engagements. Some of the approaches include re-designing curriculum, the provision of rich resources and relevant formative assessment, and perhaps most importantly, the establishment of caring, attentive relationships. The

construction of communities of inquiry and in the case of the Arts, a community of practice, is essential to the success of these approaches.

Orientation

The move towards distance education mode in teacher preparation has meant that tertiary educators have had to grapple with the pedagogical shift that is necessitated by such change (Baker, 2011, 2012, 2013). Whilst the move to online learning can largely be viewed through the lens of economic rationalism (Alter, 2014), it is a development that can be seen to be at odds with necessary preparation for the complexities and realities of teaching in practical classrooms (Huss, Eastep & Sela, 2015), due to the fundamental relationalities of Arts teaching being somewhat detached from online, asynchronous delivery (Baker, 2011, 2012, 2013).

However, online modalities have the potential to provide pre-service teachers with rich opportunities to develop practice, pedagogical knowledge and research-driven understandings of the field, when education faculties prioritise and honour e-learning curriculum development and essential, attendant professional development (Alter, 2014). Instructors previously used to 'live' classroom contexts must be supported in transforming their pedagogy to e-learning contexts. Rather than assuming that a competent classroom teacher knows how to teach in an online environment, a somewhat short-sighted assumption, institutions must provide for a range of professional development activities that specifically attends to the repositioning of extant teaching skills into online or e-pedagogy.

This reflective, practitioner study explores the Arts education experiences of tutors and students at a regional university in New South Wales [NSW] as we have drifted towards the delivery of teacher education by distance during the past years. The authors, both of whom are Arts educators with three decades' experience each, have been instrumental in both the development of innovative face-to-face [F2F] units and their subsequent translation into distance education units in both Visual Arts secondary courses and Creative Arts primary courses. In this paper, we explore both the primary and secondary cases in order to contribute more fully to the scant literature regarding the externalisation of Arts education.

Contextualising

Although a NSW based institution, Southern Cross University [SCU] services both the Northern Rivers of NSW and the Gold Coast region of South East Queensland [QLD]. Our student cohorts have traditionally been drawn from these geographical areas, however our reach is growing due to the development of distance education options being offered since 2011. However, in many 'practical' units, including those explored in this paper, our delivery

could be rightfully considered as *blended*, rather than entirely online, because whilst the bulk of curriculum is delivered online in the Arts units, we require students to be on campus for residential workshops once per iteration (semesters of 13 weeks) of 2-3 days duration. The principal mode of interface with all distance students at SCU is through the Learning Management System [LMS] of *Blackboard.*

Background

At SCU, the delivery of distinctive Arts education programs in both primary and secondary courses are a curriculum and pedagogical priority. This is challenging, given that pre-service teachers have such little time in the curriculum dedicated to Arts engagement (Alter, Hays & O'Hara, 2009). Despite this, we believe that it matters not whether we are preparing primary generalists or secondary specialist Arts educators, or supporting practicing teachers with professional learning—we assert that all teachers who are charged with the delivery of the Arts in schools ought to have an awareness of practice from a practitioner perspective. In other words, they must understand what it is to be an artist.

By this we adhere to Eisner's (2002) position regarding the attributes of the Arts and artists. That is, an artist is one who understands what it is to think within and through the particular materials of Arts practice, to make and resolve artworks in order to understand that problems can have more than one solution, and that multiple perspectives and approaches are possible. In other words, an artist is one who understands the processes, challenges, satisfactions and experiences of resolved artmaking, as well as the agencies of the artworlds that contextualise them, such as the particular audiences, domains and artworks of each Arts form (Board of Studies [BOS], 2003).

Whilst it may seem self-evident that specialist secondary Arts teachers need to understand practice in the Arts from an experiential perspective, we argue that this is also an imperative for generalist primary teachers. Although Duncum (1999) has argued that generalist teachers only need to know about teaching strategies in the Arts in order to effectively deliver it, we disagree. It is our premise that primary teachers must have an understanding of what it is to make Art as artists in the first instance (rather than just as educators) in their undergraduate preparation, in order to, in turn, ensure their own students' authentic Arts experiences. We assert that it is in this way that pre-service teachers' future teaching can be positively enhanced, drawing from their own authentic, lived experience in, through and with the Arts. Further, it is our argument that teacher preparation in Arts education, both specialist and generalist, must have robust and engaging studio components, with creative elements that involve multifaceted thinking skills, knowledge synthesis and sophisticated cognitive activity (Bresler, 1994).

Online Learning

Sadly, the guiding literature regarding best practices in online delivery of Arts teacher education is thin. A comprehensive literature search yielded only two exemplars, namely Alter (2014) and Baker (2011, 2012, 2013), both Australian scholars. Whilst erudite, those contributions did little to inform our planning and we thus turned to more generalised studies to inform our distance education development.

The literature around distance education continues to grow as the tertiary education sector embraces pedagogical advancements in this area, and the demand for flexible learning options has increased (Alter, 2014; Baker, 2013). A variety of terms for 'non-face-to-face' delivery arise, including e-learning, distance education, external delivery and online learning. All have common underpinnings with variances dependent upon their usage. Sutton and Basiel (2013) use the term teaching and learning online as an overarching title, defined as the "electronic means of distributing and engaging with learning" (p. xvii). They acknowledge the tremendous growth in the field that occurred at the turn of this century, when a huge increase in enrolment of online courses ensued in universities, perpetuating an intensified interest in the mode of delivery that may have economic benefits for institutions.

Coming from a strong Arts and secondary education background, Vygotskian (1978) socio-cultural approaches to learning and mastery have been central to our teaching in face-to-face [F2F] contexts. Our classrooms have been characterised by social encounters and practical activities that allow for collaborations and relational engagements. The challenge has been how to enable such sociocultural engagements in online contexts, where the psychological distance (Huss, et al., 2015) between students and educators seems, at first blush, insurmountable. Indeed, it is the sensitivity to this distance that appears to be a major stumbling block to perceptions by instructors and students of successful distance education (Huss, et al., 2015; Huss & Eastep, 2013). Socio-cultural learning has focused our search for guidance in the literature since as previously mentioned, there is a paucity of exemplars specific to the Arts in teacher education.

In keeping with a Vygotskian approach, Huss, et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of engagements and social interactions to successful distance education pedagogies, by using technology and to enable self-sustaining and high-quality education. They enthusiastically cite the work of Moore and Kearsley (1996) as being particularly clarifying with respect to high quality distance education, specifically the notion of *transactional distance theory*, which contends that, "distance is a relative term, a pedagogical phenomenon, and less a function of geographic separation. Transactional distance, or the cognitive space between teacher and student, comprises the intersection of dialogue, structure, and learner characteristics..." (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, as cited in Huss, et al., 2015, p. 73), and can be overcome.

Huss et al. (2015) massage the aspects of sociocultural learning and transactional distance theory into two types of interactions that are relevant for high quality distance education delivery, namely learner-to-learner interactions and instructor-to-learner interactions. Like Vygotsky, they assert that interactions, or sociocultural engagements, are crucial to a well-designed and effective educational experience.

Although such an approach may appear to echo Garrison's (2003) theoretical framework, Garrison and Cleveland-Innes (2005) assert that interactions are in and of themselves not enough, stating that, "interaction is not a guarantee that students are cognitively engaged in an educationally meaningful manner" (p. 135). Rather, Garrison and Cleveland-McInnes (2005) argue for a *Community of Inquiry* approach to online learning.

Garrison (2003) asserts that there are three interrelated dimensions essential for a community of inquiry, namely *social presence*, *cognitive presence* and *teaching presence* (Garrison & Cleveland-McInnes, 2005; Huss & Eastep, 2013). Social presence provides students with the opportunity to network with other students and teachers in order to foster positive relationships for topics of discussion as well as to better connect with the learning environment itself (Sutton & Basiel, 2013). Cognitive presence provides an arena for construction and deconstruction of meaning through regular reflection and discourse. It is this factor that promotes critical thinking and combines practical exploration of an issue, working towards communal resolutions. Teaching presence speaks to the visible tangible manifestation of the teacher's existence in the learning space, unhidden and comprehensible.

The tasks involving the design, organisation and instruction of the learning experience are attributed to the teaching presence. It is this presence that has occupied much research into the role of the facilitator in online education in order to consistently maintain the expert's insertion into this environment (Arbaugh & Hwang, 2006; Shea, Fredrickson, Pickett & Pelz, 2003). It is the alteration of the teacher presence and persona in distance education that appears to be the chief concern for educators, especially for those with a lengthy relationship with F2F modes (Alter, 2014). It challenges us as educators to re-identify, re-establish and re-negotiate who we are as teachers, and how our presence can be articulated and sustained in distance education. Teachers who undertake this change are likely to feel unsettled as they present in the new mode of delivery and should allocate time for professional reflection (Cornelius & Gash, 2012, as cited in Peacock et al., 2012). This has certainly been the way we have approached the translation to distance education.

The differences between the notion of an 'interaction' and a 'presence' is important, as an interaction in and of itself, does not necessarily presume that an inquiry is occurring. Although significant, social exchanges must be integrated with cognitive and teaching

elements to ensure that a community of inquiry is operating optimally (Garrison & Cleveland McInnes, 2005).

Garrison's three presences have been in the forefront of our planning and curriculum design at SCU as we moved from F2F delivery into the realm of distance education. This is because when considered together as a community of inquiry, these aspects address the qualitative environment and interactive demands of higher education (Garrison & Cleveland-McInnes, 2005), whilst ensuring fidelity to the sociocultural approach that has been such a successful aspect of our delivery in F2F mode.

The Specifics: Arts Education at SCU

This discussion will be divided into two distinct sections. Firstly, we will reflect upon our secondary delivery, which will be followed by a reflection on the primary delivery. The reason for the inclusion of both cases in this paper is the pressing need for exemplars of distance education in Arts education internationally.

Data from non-compulsory student feedback surveys, administered at the end of every semester, comprising the regular university evaluation, informs this discussion. In this process, students rank their unit satisfaction on a five-point Likert scale to a set of standardised questions as well as having the opportunity to provide qualitative commentary on learning experiences, unit design, teaching and assessment. For the purposes of this paper, we have included only the responses to the question that refers to overall student satisfaction in the units (see Table 1 and Table 2 below), as well as the inclusion of a selection of the additional qualitative commentary. Although somewhat flawed in its design and implementation, the student evaluation is a university wide and consistent instrument used to inform annual performance management reviews, applications for promotion and teaching awards.

All curriculum imperatives for schools in NSW are developed by the Board of Studies, Teacher Educational Standards [BOSTES], and BOSTES must approve and register all curriculum approaches in NSW Universities. The relevant syllabus documents that we must prepare teachers to utilize can be found on the BOSTES website for Secondary Visual Arts (http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_sc/visual-arts.html and http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_hsc/visual-arts.html) and Primary Creative Arts (http://k6.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/go/creative-arts). Additionally, for the Primary Creative Arts units, accreditation is sought from Australian Children's Education and Quality Care Authority (http://www.acecqa.gov.au/).

Taking Garrison's community of inquiry framework, the subsequent discussion will be

structured through the three aspects of social presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence. We reflect on our F2F approach and its translation to distance education delivery.

Secondary Visual Arts at SCU: Lexi Cutcher

Visual Arts students are largely postgraduate, usually having completed a specialist degree prior to enrolment in the secondary course. In F2F mode, students in secondary Visual Arts attended weekly 4-hour methods (curriculum specialisation) tutorials offered on campus for the duration of the semester (10 weeks of classes), for a total of 2 semesters (80 hours of F2F engagement). Students are either enrolled in the only year of a graduate diploma, or in the third year of a combined degree program. Student numbers generally range between 20-35 students in each cohort. In distance education mode from 2015, numbers have remained stable as for F2F delivery.

Since 2011, I have designed, developed and delivered *Curriculum Specialisation: Visual Arts I & II* – the units where artists learn to become Art teachers. These units have received consistently high student feedback scores for 2011-2014, when this unit was delivered F2F only (see Table 1, below. Note that 2015 is the first year of distance delivery). In 2014, I was awarded a national teaching citation specifically for my work in these units, from the *Office for Learning and Teaching* (Australian Government). Charged with the task of creating new learning modules for online engagement, I designed delivery that drew upon the three presences of Garrison's community of inquiry (2003). In my F2F teaching, these presences were integrated into curriculum and assessment design, which were in turn fully synthesised in the live performance of the class each week, allowing for an almost seamless entwinement of teaching, cognitive and social presence. Replicating this entanglement online has proved to be a particular challenge (Huss et al., 2015).

Table 1

Student Feedback in Visual Arts Curriculum Specialisation Units 2010-2015

Curriculum Specialisation: Visual Arts	% of student respondents**	student satisfaction score*	SCU mean
2010	45%	2.55	3.99
2011	42%	4.88	4.08
2012	44%	4.60	3.95
2013	37%	4.30	3.97
2014	58%	4.44	3.96

2015	62%	3.88	4.01

* Score out of 5; School average 2011–2015 is 3.9
** SCU average response rate is 34%

In attempting to achieve a semblance of parity of quality to the F2F delivery, I trialed assessment and resource delivery modifications in the year prior to full distance education delivery, in order to troubleshoot potential problems or complications. This was a particularly productive pre-planning strategy.

Teaching Presence

Curriculum and assessment design in these units have remained relatively stable, although the cognitive load has increased in online delivery since distance education presupposes a greater deal of independence and inquiry on the part of the student (see below).

Structured weekly study guides with embedded material, videos and other rich resources such as curriculum planning and programming and lesson plan exemplars were developed, as were weekly activities, quizzes, wiki postings, thinking prompts and provocations. Students responded well to these essentials in their evaluations, by stating:

> *This unit was by far the most easiest to navigate distance education subject I've taken while studying at SCU; The presentation of the online unit was excellent. The video introductions were effective and online weekly task diary enabled me to stay on track with the workload; Overall, for a distance education subject this was one of the best I have studied.*

Whilst the unit design could be considered successful, the online resources were not a satisfactory substitute for the live engagements of F2F, particularly with respect to the rehearsal of classroom management. In my F2F classes, modeling relevant pedagogy, curriculum design and classroom management, with an emphasis on student welfare and behavior was done through lively discussion, role-play and practise. I therefore made this essential teacher presence aspect a central focus of the residential workshop, ensuring that students engaged in the layered and somewhat compressed experience of learning about classroom management while learning to 'do' classroom management. As several students noted in their evaluations:

> *This unit (due to its practical nature) needs to be taught face to face. I learnt more during the three-day workshop than I did over the entire unit. Visual Arts teaching requires content knowledge in both theory and practical based areas, which can*

> *only be efficiently taught in workshops face to face; As a practical unit this should*
> *be taught face to face, to allow demonstrations and efficient development of the*
> *requirements involved in teaching*.

Social Presence

In my F2F classes, the use of humour, laughter, play and pleasure in learning is a key feature for motivation and engagement. Building productive relationships with students and ensuring that they build and sustain them amongst themselves (Huss et al., 2015) is a priority in my socio-cultural approach to learning. Designing opportunities for this in distance education delivery has been a mixed undertaking.

I developed a suite of videos and clips introducing myself and the unit, explaining and unpacking assignments and content essentials such as lesson planning and programming. Although these are not interactive, students are encouraged to engage in responsive reflections and conversations with each other on the discussion board on *Blackboard* and to wiki postings. I also conduct three collaborate (online) tutorials throughout the semester, where students are able to ask questions and discuss issues in live, synchronous time. Whilst students were active on the discussion board, and reviewed all video material consistently, attendance at the collaborate tutorials was limited. Despite this, students asserted a greater need for social interactions, and as one student reflected,

> *...another workshop earlier in term would have created a connectedness in the*
> *subject, which I found it lacked until the three day workshop (Which was fantastic!).*

The essential social presence that is such a significant factor in socio-cultural learning is somewhat constrained by learning management system such as *Blackboard*, whose capacities do not currently serve the needs of the synchronous and social engagements that are fundamental to teacher preparation. Many students asserted in their evaluations that social presence is crucial to inquiry and understandings in collaborative, live and emplaced ways. This is an aspect of distance education that I continue to prioritise, refine and develop as the extant technology becomes more sophisticated.

Cognitive Presence

Assessment tasks were expanded with weekly activities that ensured that learning was structured and allowed for self-pacing and flexibility regarding the depth of engagement. Of particular significance is the students' resource development, especially the construction of the Visual Arts Diary [VAD]. The VAD was designed as an assessment task to enhance the cognitive load, create a resource and to simulate the types of discussions that occur in F2F

delivery. The tasks are layered and sustained in both units over the entire year and students construct their learning as they move through the weekly prompts as the VAD becomes a site for thinking, reflecting, recording, observing, critiquing, analysing, and investigating the developing teacher self through visual modalities such as drawing, painting and collage. Students go on to use the VAD as a cherished resource on their initial and subsequent professional experience in schools (practicum), and into their teaching careers.

The residential workshop is a key strategy in the synthesis and development of the community of inquiry. It allows for lively collaborative discussions, shared planning and artmaking, and a robust and engaging studio element. The focus revolves around a collaborative artmaking activity in each workshop. This activity has several reflective loops where students work collectively to record their visual (rather than written) reflections about their developing teacher identities and learnings to date, onto large-scale canvases as a lived, visual inquiry. The students collectively chart their reflections, motivated by discussion, stimuli and feedback. A second layer allows for reflection upon the artwork in progress. Further negotiations and layers occur as the students attempt to resolve the painting collectively. Throughout the process, students are provoked to think about how they would manage such activities in their own classrooms, troubleshooting possible behaviour and classroom management issues. The painting thus becomes a dynamic palimpsest, portraying layers of developing pedagogy, experience, memory and learning. The networks of interactions, dialogue, relationships and group dynamics are exposed in the artworks, which simultaneously document the group's emergent teacher identities. The learning moments are individual and collective, social and dialogic as the community of inquiry is enhanced and progressed through painting as research (Sullivan, 2010). For further illumination see Cutcher and Rousell (2014); Rousell and Cutcher (2014).

Students were vocal in their evaluations of this first online iteration and the feedback score for it was at a significantly lower than in previous years, which although expected, was disappointing. It seems that the students craved learner-to-learner and instructor-to-learner interactions (Huss et al., 2015). They explained,

> *The workshop was the most valuable part of the unit. To have an earlier workshop may allow most of the participants to engage deeper in the online learning process; I think two face to face weekend workshops would be more effective for this unit. One at the beginning, and one just before the practicums would have saved many misconceptions with applying the syllabus content.*

Primary Creative Arts at SCU: Peter Cook

Our primary cohort is comprised mainly of students who have entered university directly after

completing high school, although there is a small cohort of mature age learners as well. Students complete two *Creative Arts* units, namely a foundations discipline unit (10 weeks in first semester, first year of their degree) followed by a pedagogical unit (10 weeks in second semester of second year), with 3-hour tutorials each week, meaning that overall students are provided with 15 F2F hours per Art form in their degree. Each unit covers the four discipline areas of Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts equally. Student numbers in each of these units typically range from 350-450 in each cohort, over our three campus locations. From 2015 the number of the cohort has been steady with the percentage of distance students in the Creative Arts units at 15%.

Table 2

Student Feedback in Creative Arts Units 2014 -2015

Creative Arts	**% of student respondents****	**student satisfaction score***	**SCU mean**
2014	37%	4.12	3.96
2015	36%	4.33	4.01
* Score out of 5; School average 2011–2015 is 3.9			
** SCU average response rate is 34%			

In 2013, I was employed to redesign and rewrite new primary pre-service Creative Arts units to bring them in line with new courses that would be implemented in 2014. A singular challenge is how to deliver engaging units that have authentic Creative Arts experiences at the core to students who range from accomplished and experienced to those who fear or dislike the Creative Arts, often due to poor school-based experiences (Morris & Lummis, 2014).

The first unit, *Foundations: Creative Arts* broadly explores creativity and the importance of Creative Arts in the lives and education of young people from an Australian perspective. This discipline unit provides opportunities, both theoretically and practically, in developing knowledge and skills in Dance, Drama, Music and Visual Arts. The overall aim is to increase each student's confidence, as well as personal competence in these areas. The theoretical aspect examines critical knowledge and understanding of the Creative Arts, including recent theory and practice, academic literacy and the role of technology in communicating the Creative Arts. The practical experiences build on the theoretical perspectives through processes in making, performing and appreciating activities in each of the disciplines.

The second unit entitled *Creative Arts Education: Curriculum and Pedagogy* extends the

knowledge and experiences acquired in the first unit and focuses these skills into designing teaching and learning strategies, combined with effective assessment and reporting techniques in early childhood and primary settings using relevant syllabi and frameworks. Learning centres on student engagement and inclusive teaching for diverse learners and the integration of Creative Arts across other syllabuses, known as Key Learning Areas, in primary and early childhood settings. Students are expected to work towards identifying the continuum of learning from birth through to year 6 for all of the Creative Arts.

Teaching Presence

The philosophy of students-as-artists in order to authentically and artfully construct meaningful units of work for their Creative Arts classes, focused the learning to be resource rich with innovative approaches to all aspects including robust assessment strategies, online material that was engaging and experiential tutorials. In the first iteration of the unit under my restructuring, the internal students were offered a blended delivery of the unit, which required them to engage closely with online learning materials prior to attending compulsory, practical F2F tutorials.

My approach to the imminent externalization of these units was to revamp the existing online materials to ensure that students were provided with a manageable pathway through the material that contained built-in moments to check for learning. This was achieved through a series of self-graded tasks that were mandatory. The material studied online was not duplicated in F2F tutorials or workshops and students were constantly reminded of the need to participate in every component of the unit's experience including engaging with the relevant online material in preparation for the F2F classes. The new, distance education cohort joined in with the existing online narrative and attended a residential workshop.

The teacher presence in these two now blended units, include instructional videos tailored to meet the needs of this unit for both internal and external students. Whilst the recordings largely provide expansions on definitions of key elements and concepts, they also provide an artful context using a range of artistic works, some of which may be unfamiliar and challenging to students. Some recordings also have a specifically pedagogical function, for example, unpacking a syllabus or providing clarity on assignment work.

It appears that despite all efforts, it is problematic to replicate the immediate and spontaneous feedback that occurs in an F2F environment in the online environment. Distance students are required to submit responses to activities they are working on, however responses and feedback are delayed. This is one of the features of the practical components of the Creative Arts that does not translate well into distance learning. Ensemble work featured in the Performing Arts is also problematic for external students as they may be working in isolation

and in remote locations.

Student evaluations relating to the success of the foundations unit in 2015 found that 81% of respondents agreed that the study materials greatly assisted their learning and 91% of respondents agreed that the unit was easy to navigate.

Social Presence

The social presence features of these two units include engagement in the discussion board on the *Blackboard* site, online tutorials (collaborate sessions) for both distance and F2F students, weekly three-hour tutorial sessions for internal students and a mandatory two-day workshop for external students. The material prepared for these workshops is derived from the tutorial material offered to F2F students.

The workshop and the online collaborate sessions allow for synchronous exchanges between tutors and students thus enabling, albeit briefly, the learner-to-learner and instructor-to-learner interactions (Huss et al., 2015) and social presence that contribute to a community of inquiry (Garrison, 2003; Garrison & Cleveland-McInnes, 2005). These sessions afford students the opportunity to meet in a virtual setting and question, discuss and reflect on the issues of the day, as does the compulsory two-day workshop.

I was challenged to develop a new teaching persona, which required a pedagogical transformation involving many hours of research, reading and practise. In preparation for this conversion I investigated literature that discussed e-pedagogy, focusing mainly on Garrison (2003) for his easily transferable knowledge to my scenario. I reflected on teaching techniques that had held me in good stead in the F2F environment, such as vocal intonation and body language, and rehearsed alternatives by emphasising positive speech patterns and energetic delivery. I found myself physicalizing at the end of a microphone but believed the vibrant arm actions and head nodding translated to passion and enthusiasm to the learners who heard but did not see the actions. Despite the successful design of the units, the technology occasionally failed both instructors and students, as one student asserted:

> *I thought this unit was presented well … the workshops were beneficial and a good place to help motivate engagement. The keys areas for improvement that I can identify would be to get better internet speeds so video streaming is possible in tutorials. To find innovative ways to encourage students to participate during tutorials when and if required, sometimes it felt awkward talking in the collabs and finding ways to build confidence in the students as a group.*

Indeed, 100% of the respondents to the student evaluation agreed that the residential activities

enriched the learning experience.

Cognitive Presence

The cognitive presence features of these two units include the online material being delivered using a narrative voice with opportunities for students to engage with resources that are inviting. All assessments designed in the preparation of these two units have strong Arts making and performing components. Students are challenged constantly to create, collaboratively where possible, and provide written reflections based on their understandings. In this way, even the most accomplished artists amongst the cohort need to modify their works to fit unit requirements.

Tasks become much more about collaborative Arts making rather than a sheer demonstration of outstanding skills or technical excellence in performance. The assignment work is designed to demonstrate students' creativity, in collaboration with each other and also with the processes of making. It was obvious that students demonstrated interest and motivation for the activities. As one student enthusiastically claimed:

> *I think that the two-day workshop attached to this unit was amazing, and helped me with both my understanding and confidence with in this subject…But overall I started with dreading this subject and by then end it became my favourite.*

Conclusions

Our fledgling experiences in distance education delivery of Arts education units affirm Garrison's (2003) assertions regarding the necessary elements of presence, namely social, cognitive and teacher. Indeed these are necessary elements in any teaching, irrespective of delivery mode.

Our student feedback consistently asserts that students in Arts units demand live, emplaced, collaborative engagement (social and cognitive presence) in combination with aspects of the course material (teacher presence). Whilst many were satisfied with the organisation of the unit sites on *Blackboard,* and content to work through weekly exercises, resources and readings, they ultimately craved gregarious engagement with the cohort (learner-to-learner) and more importantly, with the instructor (instructor-to-learner) on the campus site. Thus, we argue that in Arts education units, if a F2F delivery is not possible, then a blended delivery is the pre-eminent approach.

In our design, we place the online material and rich resources at the core of independent and asynchronous learning. The readings, website, instructor and video resources add texture to

the development of curriculum knowledge, or the cognitive presence in the units. Teacher presence is initially established through videos and other visual resources, where the students can hear and see their tutor from the first week of the unit. In many cases, this is advantageous for students as they can pause the recordings, replay dense information or revisit documents throughout their viewings. Social presence is accomplished through the use of the collaborates, discussion board postings and significantly, the F2F engagements through workshops and tutorials, where collaborative studio activities enrich learning and preparation. These aspects are vital to the successful delivery of our Arts units.

In online or blended deliveries of Arts education in pre-service preparation, the instructor must proactively commit to the transformation of their practice in this environment. The institution must invest wisely and commit to considered planning and preparation, including but not limited to supportive professional development. Further, more time must be given in teacher preparation for this vital curriculum area.

Whilst the *Blackboard* environment allows for variations in online engagement, it is also constraining, particularly to curriculum areas that require synchronous and rich discussion, correction and engagement, such as the Arts. In any teacher preparation modality, it must be acknowledged that a fundamental of quality teaching is its relationality, its gregariousness, its responsiveness, its emotional and interpersonal demands. The construction of communities of inquiry (Garrison, 2003; Garrison & Cleveland-McInnes, 2005), and in the case of the Arts, a community of practice, is the essential piece.

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